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Research Memorandum
REU-74, October 31, 1962

TO : The Secretary
THROUGH: S/S
FROM : INR - Roger Hillsman

SUBJECT: Western European Reactions to the Soviet Decision to
Dismantle the Missile Bases in Cuba

By the morning of October 30 the following reactions to the Soviet announcement on October 28 of decision to withdraw the missile bases from Cuba had begun to emerge in Western Europe.

The announcement of the Soviet decision to dismantle the missile bases in Cuba evoked great relief from governments, the press and the public throughout Western Europe. This feeling of relief was sustained through the two days following announcement of the decision. Almost marked was the feeling that the Soviet decision represented a major diplomatic victory for American firmness. There was a greater readiness now than before the Soviet announcement to accept the American view of the gravity of the threat the bases had posed to Western security, and there was widespread admiration for President Kennedy's handling of the crisis. To put it somewhat differently, the Soviet decision had the effect of confirming the American analysis of the strategic implications of the bases and justifying the strong line taken by the President.

On the other hand, there was considerable praise for Khrushchev, not exclusively confined to the left wing, and many were pleased that the UN would have a role in events. Some, particularly among the British press, feared that Khrushchev's position in the Kremlin might be jeopardized by the Soviet action and that he might be replaced by a harder-liner. Most Western European papers warned against crowing over Khrushchev, and almost all public figures refrained from doing so in public comments.

As to what lay ahead, there was wide agreement that negotiations on broad issues were likely to ensue, and a readiness in many countries to find in the outcome of the Cuban affair signs that these negotiations had a brighter chance of success than before. In some countries, however, notably Germany, there was a conviction that the Soviets might simply shift their offensive to another field and that caution was more than ever the watchword. And finally, although there were those who noted that the Soviet bases had not yet been dismantled, and that this would have to be the first order of business, for the most part there seemed to be little doubt that the Russians would proceed as promised.

In the North Atlantic Council, NATO representatives of a number of countries commended the President's handling of the situation. They

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considered that it was urgent to plan next moves, and the Belgian, Turkish and Greek representatives stressed the importance of NATO consultation.

A country-by-country analysis follows:

UK: The government, in its first comment, welcomed the Soviet decision and was especially pleased by Soviet acceptance of UN inspection for the dismantling. This latter point was repeated by the Government in the Queen's Speech from the Throne opening the new session of parliament. The Queen's Speech did not fail, however, to express the UK's "grave concern" over the introduction of offensive missiles into Cuba. The British press, which had by and large been critical of the United States during the earlier phases of the Cuban base crisis, was somewhat sheepishly congratulating both Kennedy and Khrushchev on the outcome and stressing the importance of exploiting this favorable break in a renewed search for peaceful solutions to outstanding problems. Labor spokesman Harold Wilson thought the Russians had secured their main objective, the "guarantee of the territorial integrity of a communist state on the borders of America." Many British newspapers saw in the Soviet acceptance of UN inspection favorable omens for gaining Soviet agreement to the on-site inspection principle in connection with nuclear test ban and surprise attack negotiations. Agitation by ban-the-Bomb groups fell off almost immediately following announcement of the Soviet decision.

France: "Official circles" attributed the Soviet decision (called "historic" by the state radio) to US firmness. They pointed out the need for an international control body to assure dismantling of the bases. These same officials were reported to be emphasizing that France would expect a place at the conference table if East-West negotiations on broader issues ensued. There has been no official government statement as yet.

Germany: Relief and applause for US firmness were heavily tinged with caution. Through official spokesman von Hase, the Cabinet expressed its continued concern with the situation and authorized the Minister of Defense to prepare special military readiness measures. Von Hase warned that in any negotiations between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, the Soviet retreat in Cuba could not be treated as a concession from the Soviet side. Both the SPD and the CDU, the former through a spokesman and the latter through its press service, emphasized that US firmness had brought about the favorable outcome in Cuba, and considered that if US determination had now been brought home to Khrushchev, this might improve the outlook for negotiations on other problems. The CDU specifically mentioned general controlled disarmament and the Berlin and German question as among these problems.

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many, including the SPD and large sections of the Soviet countermovement, but most papers were found the most effective means in hand.

found the most effective way to deal with many who expected a lasting relaxation

views prevailed in Berlin, where Mayor
even while expressing the hope that Berl

Cuban base episode. The Soviets could
of the United States to support its posi

e in Berlin were highly gratified by the
cted Soviet machinations against Berlin

their confidence in American strength and
officials and intellectuals thought the Soviet
outstanding issues and mentioned that the

standing issues, and cautioned some to be careful.

ime Minister Fanfani's initial reaction
a spokesman, was that it was "very posi

he conciliatory efforts of the Secretary
the Embassy to inform Washington that he

of the crisis removed a serious strain

center, right and moderate left masses

nts, seeing American actions fully justified. Khrushchev must be having difficulties in

ence for a "flexible Khrushchev in treaty
ki.

Prime Minister Diefenbaker saw hope in the

the Western Hemisphere from long-range
d. He attributed the removal to "unity

along the Western Allies and mentioned Co
the shipment by air of bloc war material
the same as self-accumulations in the

the same time, he noted universal relief that the Cuban problem had "greatly improved."

He singled out the UN for special praise.

"good offices of Secretary G
s ahead for the world body. As to the

as which will follow the immediate set possibilities for progress in the settl

West, particularly in the field of i

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Diefenbaker, in a separate statement before the Canadian House of Commons, called for the speedy resumption of the Geneva Disarmament Conference and announced that Canada was prepared to contribute to an inspection team for Cuba.

Canadian Foreign Minister Green was a bit more cautious, emphasizing in an airport departure statement the fact that the dismantling of the Cuban bases was yet to be carried out and stressing the role of the UN in this action.

Opposition leader Lester Pearson expressed relief at the easing of the Cuban crisis but warned against dangers elsewhere, particularly in Berlin. If the settlement of the Cuban crisis led to reduction of tensions elsewhere, President Kennedy's firmness would be the reason, Pearson said. The door was open to negotiations, but they should be entered upon without illusions, and they called for wisdom, restraint, firmness and solidarity among the Atlantic Allies. Canada, as "an important member of this (Atlantic) coalition," could play an important role in the days ahead as she had in the past.

Others. Expressing their gratification in early reactions to the Soviet decision, the Danish Foreign Minister saw hope that "a final settlement" of the Cuban situation "in peace" might be in the offing, and the Norwegian Prime Minister's relief at the end of the crisis was undisguised. The press organ of the Norwegian labor movement had equal praise for the President and Khrushchev.

In Belgium, Foreign Minister Spaak "thanked and congratulated" Khrushchev for his positive response to President Kennedy's proposals.

No official statement was issued by the Austrians, Swedes or Finns. The Austrian and some elements of Swedish press in early reaction felt the Soviet decision to withdraw represented a major capitulation and a great victory for US policy, but some Swedish papers thought Moscow might have gained something or had not yet shown its hand.

He reportedly remarked in a private conversation that the US was justified in quarantining military shipments. He said his only concern was that US policy might soften.

There was little reaction as yet from The Netherlands. One newspaper (De Telegraaf-independent) admired Kennedy's statesmanship and Khrushchev's realism in recognizing that Kennedy was not bluffing. Another (De Volkskrant-Catholic) expected the West to be confronted with new Soviet tactics once Cuba was out of the way.

A Spanish official in Geneva called on the US representative to convey congratulations to the President on the Cuban developments, but warned of grave danger to the rest of Latin America as long as Castro remained in power.

There is as of this writing, on the morning of October 30, no information on reactions in Portugal, Iceland, Luxembourg or Switzerland.